

Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture  
**News Release**

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 27, 2002

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Diane Baedeker Petit, 617-626-1752, [Diane.Baedeker@state.ma.us](mailto:Diane.Baedeker@state.ma.us)  
Michael Cahill, 617-626-1794, [Michael.Cahill@state.ma.us](mailto:Michael.Cahill@state.ma.us)

**Third Annual Statewide Rabies Vaccination Day Planned for April 6**  
**Cities and towns to hold low-cost rabies vaccination clinics**

Cities and towns across the Commonwealth will hold low-cost rabies vaccination clinics on Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup> as part of the Third Annual Statewide Rabies Vaccination Day. The Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Health started this program to raise awareness of rabies and increase compliance with state vaccination laws. All dogs, cats and ferrets living in Massachusetts are required by law to be vaccinated against rabies.

Pet owners are encouraged to bring the family pet to be vaccinated against rabies on April 6th to locations designated by cities and towns. The cost of the vaccination will be about \$10 per animal. Check with your Town or City Hall for the local place, time and cost. A list of participating towns will also be posted on the Department of Food and Agriculture's web page, at <http://www.mass.gov/dfa>.

Statewide Rabies Vaccination Day is co-sponsored by the Department of Food and Agriculture and Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and in cooperation with the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Animal Rescue League of Boston, the Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association and the Cape Cod Veterinary Association. This year, the Governor will also declare April as Rabies Awareness Month.

In 2001, 280 animals tested positive for rabies at the State Lab. More than 300 domestic animals were exposed to the virus as a result. Because of the low compliance with the vaccination laws, euthanasia was the outcome in about 15 percent of the domestic animal exposure cases. Last year, 45 pets had to be put to sleep because they were not currently vaccinated.

-- MORE --

Rabies is an infectious and contagious disease that can be transmitted to humans. The virus is considered to be 100 percent fatal, if untreated. Exposed animals must be dealt with properly to ensure public safety. Exposed dogs and cats, which are not currently vaccinated, must either be isolated at an animal hospital for three months, or be destroyed.

Rabies is now a permanent fixture in the wildlife population of Massachusetts. Though the virus may not be detected in an area for long periods of time, it is still present. Vaccinating your dog or cat is the best way to prevent the threat of rabies from entering your home. Keeping your pets up-to-date on their rabies shots is not only the law, it is also in the best interest of your animals and your family.